2a

Silver Spring Transportation Management District Advisory Committee (SSTMD AC) Meeting Summary
April 16, 2009

1, 2, 3. Introductions, Review of February Minutes, Chair's Comments: Members and guests introduced themselves. March minutes were approved and seconded with minor corrections.

Item 4 –Veteran's Plaza and IOS Update: Donald Scheuerman, Chief Engineer, DGS Design Section, briefed the committee on IOS operations. **Mr. Scheuerman** said the IOS is working very well, with no major problems to report. Snow and ice removal worked well over the winter; there were no complaints from residents.

Some minor problems were reported by WMATA. Curb heights were raised from Dixon to Ramsey in order to facilitate the proper ADA slope on the sidewalks. Curb heights were raised from the usual 6-8 inches to 10 inches. This caused a minor problem with deploying the ADA ramps on some older Metro buses. Metro is using newer buses to deal with the issue, which appears to have solved the problem.

Mr. Polk asked how construction was progressing. **Mr. Scheuerman** said that utility relocation is currently underway, necessary in order to start digging the foundation. The project managers are working with the major utility providers to relocate water and sanitary lines, the entire electrical feed for the Metro station and Verizon phone lines. **Mr. Scheuerman** stated that the utility work would not result in a loss of service.

Mr. Scheuerman said that DOT had started storm water work on East West Highway recently and damaged an electrical line, resulting in an outage to Discovery's other work site. He continued that the project utility work on the IOS has so far been problem-free, with no damage to utility lines. In addition to utility relocation work, the IOS will begin installation of building caissons (supports) within about 30 days. Within the next two weeks, work will also begin to sheet and shore the site to prevent neighboring buildings from shifting. After utility relocation, caisson installation and sheeting/shoring, major excavation work on the foundation will begin.

Mr. Scheuerman stated also that temporary ponds have been added to the site to meet Erosion and Sediment Control (E&S) regulations.

Sande Brecher added that some trees were being cut down. **Mr. Scheuerman** said Pepco is permitted to trim or remove trees in order to do utility work. Some trees are being preserved at present, but the developer may decide to remove them at some point.

Sgt. Harmon asked if dump trucks will be using Bonifant Street, or if there is alternative route. **Mr. Scheuerman** said that most truck traffic will have to use Bonifant to access the site. This will be closely coordinated with Ride On to help minimize interference with the buses.

Mr. McLaughlin said that from a service delivery perspective, Ride On bus operations at the IOS are going much better than expected. Bonifant offers a little more space to operate, so there should be some flexibility in allowing truck traffic.

Sgt. Harmon noted that any problems will likely occur if the trucks stack at the entrance to the site and cause a backup. **Mr. Scheuerman** added that the developer is obligated to keep backups from happening, but should it occur that there are a larger number of trucks trying to enter the site than can be immediately accommodated, they can stage on Cedar Street and call ahead. **Mr. McLaughlin** added that it will take continuous coordination to ensure backups are avoided.

Ms. Brecher asked how heavy traffic on Bonifant would be handled during the peak period. **Mr. Scheuerman** said that the original plan for the IOS called for a uniformed officer to be present from 8 am – 8 pm (Mon-Fri). The IOS Working Group, which meets frequently, adjusted the scheduled time to 8 am to noon, eliminating the officer from noon to 4 pm, and increasing the presence to two officers from 4 pm to 8 pm. Morning traffic tends to be more predictable and easier for one crossing guard to control. Evenings require more of a presence due to the arrival of the trains, causing a large rush of commuters onto the streets. Having two officers on site allows for greater flexibility. For example, the taxis that line up on Ramsey sometimes stack beyond the permitted area and reach to the corner of Ramsey and Bonifant. Having uniformed officers on site permits a quick response to remind drivers of the rules.

Mr. Polk asked about the status of Veteran's Plaza. **Mr. Scheuerman** said that utility work on between Elsworth Drive and Pershing Drive has been completed. Curb work and sidewalks will not go in until construction on the Civic Building is farther along. Most of the concrete foundation work is complete; steel framing is expected to begin going up within the next two weeks.

Mr. Polk asked about the completion schedule. **Mr. Scheuerman** stated he thought it would take about a year to complete.

Mr. Scheuerman added that there would be a design charette this evening at the Coffield Center to discuss the exterior for the new Silver Spring Library. There will be four charettes relating to the exterior of the building.

Item 5 – Ride On Update: Mr. McLaughlin stated that despite some initial concerns, the Bonifant Street operation is working better than expected. There are some minor difficulties with outbound trips, which have been leaving few minutes later than their scheduled times. The plan for bus operations in the IOS was to minimize layover times, because there was some uncertainty about the amount of space that would be available for buses to stage. Consequently, the amount of time available between departures is about 3 minutes before the hour, when the bus is supposed to pull out, vs. 5 minutes when the transit center was operational. The extra couple of minutes allowed drivers to adjust if they are running a few minutes behind. With the compressed time of the IOS, buses are pulling out a little later, especially during the evening rush. Inbound trips are typically running on time. There will be some schedule adjustments this summer to maximize the layover time, allowing more outbound trips to leave on time.

Prior to November of 2008, Ride On ridership had increased by about 32 percent over the prior 60-month period, outpacing the region and the country. Since November, however, ridership has decreased by 1 ½ - 2 percent. The economy and fuel prices are seen as probable causes of the decrease. During the peak summer gas prices, Ride On was carrying up to 105,000 riders a day; since gas prices have gone down, ridership is around 90,000 – 92,000 a day. In January, paper transfers were eliminated, so people who do not use SmarTrip or any of the discounted fare media were not able to get a transfer, resulting in some ridership losses. Not everyone has transitioned to SmarTrip. At present, about 35 percent of riders use SmarTrip, which is somewhat lower than expected (around 50 percent).

Jim Polk asked why people are charged for the card. **Mr. McLaughlin** said the card is not manufactured by WMATA or Montgomery County. **Charles Segerman** added that it seemed like the card itself was not well made and had a tendency to break or malfunction. He said it should also be free of charge.

Ms. Brecher added that the cards are replaced free by Metro if there is a problem with the value replaced (as long as the card is registered).

Mr. McLaughlin said that when Ride On got the first SmarTrip fireboxes about 2 ½ years ago, there was a budget item to purchase about 50,000 SmarTrip cards. The cards were to be given away at Metro stations. However, during the last several fiscal years there have been budget cuts and the SmarTrip line item has been cut each time. About 9,000 cards have been given to social service agencies; anyone involved in a social service program could get one at no charge. There are about 5,000 still to be distributed.

Mr. McLaughlin said also that it would be good if SmarTrip could be used in more places, such as garages, but that the company which manufactures the cards, fireboxes and software, Cubic Transportation Systems, is very proprietary about its information.

Ms. Brecher added that there is a long-term plan to get away from Cubic when the contract expires and move to a system that has an open architecture. That will enable more applications for the card and also bring down the cost.

Terrie O'Steen said that another problem with SmarTrip is the lack of a pass system. It is cheaper to buy a pass than use SmarTrip and be charged full fare. **Mr. McLaughlin** said the next step in the process is to load discounted passes on the card, scheduled for later this year. **Ms. Brecher** added that the County has been in discussions with WMATA regarding the passes, and within a year some, though maybe not all passes should be available on SmarTrip.

Mr. Polk asked about VanGo ridership. **Mr. McLaughlin** said Ride On had added a third bus in September. Ridership is up about 30 riders per day (total about 820/day); however, the system for collecting data on VanGo is different than with a regular Ride On bus. Data is collected every two months on VanGo vs. daily with a typical Ride On bus.

Ms. Brecher said that adding the third bus to the route helps ensure people with ADA disabilities are better able to navigate the IOS.

Mr. Polk asked about the Ride On budget. **Mr. McLaughlin** stated that in FY08 service cuts of 1 ½ percent were implemented last Spring, which was the end of the fiscal year. The budget was again reduced by another 1 ½ percent in FY09. Reductions were strategic, hitting low-performing routes in order to impact as few riders as possible. During FY10, Ride On is proposing a service reduction of about 4 ½ percent, which will be much more significant than the preceding years, and involves full route eliminations. There was a public forum on March 24th, attended by 39 speakers, and the County has received 250 emails and letters that were virtually all opposed to the cuts (one voted in favor). There were also three petitions with 500 signatures all requesting that service be retained. Public comment period closed on March 31st. There is no final decision at this point. The total proposed reduction is for $2.7 Million, reflecting the 4 ½ percent reduction, and is in the County Executive's budget, currently with Council. Cuts are proposed for a July 1 implementation.

Ms. Brecher stated there is a resolution pending in the Council that will allow Parking Lot District (PLD) funds to be taken out of the PLD and used for any transit service the County provides that serves a PLD.

Samantha Mazo said the legislation would permit the Council to use the money, but the definition of the term "transit service that serves the PLD" is vague and may impact the Silver Spring TMD more than the others.

Mr. Polk asked if the resolution would allow money to be taken out of the PLD and applied anywhere in the county. **Ms. Brecher** said she understood the legislation meant that money must be applied to transit service within the affected PLD.

Mr. McLaughlin is filling County Council's request to collect data showing Ride-On routes that operate inside the PLDs.

Ms. Mazo has forwarded the draft of the bill to **Mr. Carlson** who will send to the other members of the Advisory Committee. It is her understanding that the bill will take parking funding and put it into transit that serves that individual PLD; however, that will also take money away from making necessary parking improvements.

Ms. Brecher asked if worrying about funds being taken away from parking is in keeping with the mission of the TMD, which is to get commuters out of their cars and into alternative modes of transit.

Mr. Polk decided to table the issue until **Jim Carlson** sends the bill for everyone to read. **Ms. Mazo** stated that the item is scheduled for discussion on May 9th.

Mr. McLaughlin was asked if Ride-On was any closer to becoming self sufficient and making a profit. **Mr. Mclaughlin** stated that 15 percent of the operating cost is recovered from fares boxes and the other 85 percent is subsidized. Nationally, suburban area fare recovery is about 22-23 percent. Regionally, bus fares are lower because rail fares tend to have a higher recovery rate (80-85%). Fifty percent of bus riders transfer to another form of public transit.

Item 6 – Pedestrian Safety Audit Update: Mr. Polk asked about the audit. **Sgt. Harmon** explained that the pedestrian safety audit looked at the Georgia Avenue corridor from Spring Street down to Sligo Avenue critiquing pedestrian safety and traffic flow at the14 intersections. One of the members of the audit who is visually impaired (**Bill Smith**) pointed out ADA issues.

Sgt. Harmon said that the Georgia Avenue Pedestrian safety audit is similar to the one done last year on Piney Branch Avenue. Members of the audit looked at intersection safety and talked to residents about conditions. They also looked at road conditions, signage, crosswalk-engineering and speed limits. During a five year period (2003-2007) the statistics showed that there were 541 vehicle crashes from Spring Street to Sligo, 35 of which were pedestrian strikes and one bicycle collision. Twenty-five to 35 pedestrian crashes were attributed to safety conditions at intersections and 435 involved alcohol. At Spring Street there was one pedestrian strike and 35 vehicle crashes; on Cameron – one pedestrian strike and 12 vehicle crashes; Colesville-10 pedestrian and 75 vehicle crashes; on Wayne – five pedestrian and 43 vehicle crashes.

Sgt. Harmon stated that there was room for improvement, with issues such as signage being placed where it is not easily readable, inconsistent labeling and signal timing length disparities at crosswalks.

Ms. Brecher asked **Sgt. Harmon** what he saw on Piney Branch. He said that there was an island placement on the meridian between Piney Branch and University which was apparently already planned before the audit. The issue he found during the audit was the inconsistency of the 40 mph speed limit on Piney Branch from University to New Hampshire while the rest of Piney Branch is 30 to 35 mph. The ½ mile stretch of highway is a downhill and winding road with schools and apartment buildings nearby and is one of the high incidence areas in the county. Police cannot get to the cars in time to prevent speeding. He wants to decrease the limit to 35 mph. He has made state highway aware of the issue.

Ms. Brecher suggested speed cameras may gain help from the State

Mr. Carlson will send a formal request to VHB for the Georgia Avenue audit findings and forward to the Committee for review.

Andrew Wexler said he had distributed a news article about an intersection improvement at Fenwick and Second Avenue. Advocates for Senior Source had been working with **Councilmember Valerie Ervin's** office to install a pedestrian button to turn the light red when pedestrians needed to cross. **Mr. Wexler** expressed concern that the committee had not been advised of the change.

Mr. Wexler reported that there were a number of street lights out, making it harder for pedestrians and drivers to see hazards and which discouraged nighttime walking. However, members of the audit team were pleased about the crosswalk median design at Georgia Avenue and Ellsworth Drive that discouraged mid-street crossing and would like that same design to replace the reversible lanes on Colesville Road to eliminate driver confusion. He also stated that he would like to see a pedestrian audit expand to conclude Colesville Road. **Ms. Brecher** said there will be signal changes at Colesville and Georgia starting in June or July.

Item 7 – Updates: TMD/DOT/Police/Other County Updates: Mr. Carlson reiterated the County guidelines for advisory committee attendance. Members can miss up to three of the 11 monthly meetings (the committee does not meet in August), with the fourth absence being cause for removal; or, members can be removed after missing three consecutive sessions. **Mr. Carlson** stated that, beginning in July, the new fiscal year, he will send out letters outlining attendance policies. He asked the committee to refer to number seven under Administration and Attendance in the *Policies and Procedures for Citizen Boards, Committees and Commissions* included in the meeting packet. **Mr. Carlson** also stated that they were looking to fill the two vacant seats on the committee, representing Large and Small Employers.

Mr. Polk asked about Traffic Mitigation Plans (TMPs). **Ms. O'Steen** said there were no TMP updates.

Ms. Brecher announced the following updates:

- The new online system for filing Traffic Mitigation Plans and Annual Reports is going well.
- The Trips Commuter Store in Friendship Heights is expected to open in late spring.
- Clarksburg bus depot funding has been scaled back from the original plan to accommodate 250 buses to 120 buses, with room to have funding put back if available.
- The North County bus depot will allow Montgomery county public transportation to expand to the northern part of the county, the only place in MC that is left for expansion.
- The county will be installing fare boxes on the VanGo.
- Part of DOT offices will be moving to the GE building on Route 28 in Rockville.
- There will be a conference call later in the week on the feasibility of taxing employee SmartBenefits.
- **Councilmember Marc Elrich**, who gave a presentation about Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), received $500,000 in funding from the County Council for a study of his BRT proposal.
- Brick pavers will use the "Bethesda standard" for all new urban construction. In the Bethesda Standard, non-slip bricks without beveled edges are laid in a herringbone pattern and placed in a concrete base.

Mr. Carlson said that SmartBenefits Vouchers can now be ordered through the county's Fare Media Office. The order forms are in the draft stage but they will be available in May for June orders.

Mr. Carlson informed the committee about the availability of travel reimbursement and dependent care for all voting members.

Ms. O'Steen reminded members about Bike to Work day on May 15th from 6:30am to 8:30am.

Item 8 –
Meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.
Next meeting date: June 11, 2009

Silver Spring Transportation Management District Advisory Committee (SSTMD AC)
Attendance Sheet
April 16, 2009

Voting Members (12)			
Name	**Affiliation**	**Present**	**Absent**
Chamber Members (3)			
Samantha Mazo	Linowes and Blocher LLP	X	
James S. Polk, Chairman	Technology Service Corporation	X	
Tom Collins	Atlantech Online		X
Citizens Advisory Board Members (3)			
Edward Furgol	Kemp Mill, Four Corners, East SS	X	
Charles Segerman, Vice Chairman	North & West Sector Plan Area	X	
Andy Wexler	CBD Resident	X	
TMD Employers less than 50 employees (3)			
Julian Leidman (pending replacement)	Small Business Representative		X
Suvita Melehy	Melehy & Associates		X
Cathy Wilde	Solid Waste Assoc of North America	X	
TMD Employers with 50 or more employees (3)			
G. Michael Price	Discovery Communications	X	
Robin Goudy	Social & Scientific Systems	X	
Vacant			
Non-Voting Members (4)			
Sandra Brecher, DOT Transit Services	DOT Director or Designee	X	
Shahriar Etemadi	M-NCPPC		X
Sergeant Thomas Harmon	Montgomery County Police	X	
Staff			
Terrie O'Steen	DOT/Commuter Services	X	
Nakengi Byrd	DOT/Commuter Services		X
Jim Carlson	DOT/Commuter Services	X	
Guests			
Philip McLaughlin	DOT/Transit Services	X	
Donald Scheuerman	DGS/Design Section	X	
Mel Tull	SS Regional Services Center	X	

S:\CmtrSvcs\SSTMDAC\Minutes09\SSTMD Min 04.16.09 rv nb jc.doc

Silver Spring Transportation Management District Advisory Committee (SSTMD AC)
Attendance Sheet
April 16, 2009

Voting Members (12)			
Name	**Affiliation**	**Present**	**Absent**
Chamber Members (3)			
Samantha Mazo	Linowes and Blocher LLP	X	
James S. Polk, Chairman	Technology Service Corporation	X	
Tom Collins	Atlantech Online		X
Citizens Advisory Board Members (3)			
Edward Furgol	Kemp Mill, Four Corners, East SS	X	
Charles Segerman, Vice Chairman	North & West Sector Plan Area	X	
Andy Wexler	CBD Resident	X	
TMD Employers less than 50 employees (3)			
Julian Leidman (pending replacement)	Small Business Representative		X
Suvita Melehy	Melehy & Associates		X
Cathy Wilde	Solid Waste Assoc of North America	X	
TMD Employers with 50 or more employees (3)			
G. Michael Price	Discovery Communications	X	
Robin Goudy	Social & Scientific Systems	X	
Vacant			
Non-Voting Members (4)			
Sandra Brecher, DOT Transit Services	DOT Director or Designee	X	
Vacant	M-NCPPC		
Sergeant Thomas Harmon	Montgomery County Police	X	
Staff			
Terrie O'Steen	DOT, Commuter Services	X	
Nakengi Byrd	DOT, Commuter Services	X	
Jim Carlson	DOT, Commuter Services	X	
Guests			
Donald Scheuerman	MC-DGS	X	
Philip McLaughlin	DOT, Ride On	X	
Mel Tull	SS Regional Services Center	X	